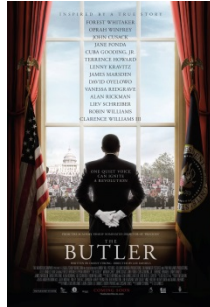


THE BUTLER

By Lorraine Viade, Psy.D.



The Butler is a well-written, multi-generational history lesson that is as much a journey through the civil rights movement with its turbulent beginnings and struggles as it is the interpersonal struggles between father and son. We are caught up in the lives of a family that has seen more than its share of civil unrest. Forest Whitaker is wonderful as a butler who overcomes his childhood trauma and eventually winds up serving American presidents from Eisenhower to Reagan. The backdrop is a startling mix of reenactment and historical footage. Through the eyes of a child in the cotton field, a protesting youth living through the civil rights protests firsthand, to eventually meeting the first African-American president, the audience is drawn in over and over again. If you are old enough to remember the events that are depicted in *The Butler*, you will be moved again by the poignant images, the painful memories and the ongoing struggle for freedom, civil rights and liberty.

Oprah Winfrey turns in a good performance as the matriarch who is affected by her role not just in her home, but in society. Her dignity, in spite of her many afflictions, was evident in how she treated her husband and her children. Her appreciation for the sacrifices that are made by everyone, including herself, do not go unnoticed. There are many cameo performances by skilled actors who lend their talents to the story, but the heart and soul of *The Butler* belongs to Whitaker. He's a proud yet cautious man who does what is needed for the well-being and security of his family.

The Butler reminds us of how much pain, suffering and loss this nation has endured, and how racism remains such a corrosive force that we cannot ever stop our efforts to overcome the past, lest we be doomed to relive it. *The Butler* is a story of endurance, survival, forgiveness and healing. For teens who need to learn about what many lived through and for those who lived through it, *The Butler* serves us all very well.

I give *The Butler* four trays.

